MAY/JUNE 2023
ISSUE 3

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Issue three. Holy shit. When I started this zine, I didn't expect the response that I got, but I'm genuinely grateful for it. I always aimed to connect people and bring together the diverse and passionate folks in the food industry. Although I stepped away from the kitchen some time ago, I still haven't lost my appetite. This zine gives me a chance to keep my finger on the pulse of the industry and engage with the community meaningfully.

People have been asking me about a theme for this issue, but I'll be damned if I let myself be pigeonholed. So, this issue is like a nice soup, full of different ingredients and flavors that'll leave you feeling satisfied and full.

And, speaking of full, you may have noticed a few ads in these pages. Hey, we gotta pay the bills somehow, right? But let me be crystal clear, I'm not about to promote some BS that I don't believe in myself.

So, I urge you to check out the ads and support the folks who have shown us love and support. They're the reason we're able to keep bringing you this zine, and we couldn't do it without them.

Cheers,

Steve Martinho
Editor-in-Chief

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SAVE CHINATOWN!

The billionaire owners of the 76ers want to build a new arena just one block away from this neighborhood - a neighborhood that's home to families, seniors, and students. And we can't let that happen.

These billionaire developers are trying to placate Chinatown by working on a "Community Benefits Agreement." But here's the thing: they're negotiating behind closed doors with a select few, without public input or oversight. They're trying to show that the community has agreed to the arena, without actually listening to the full community. And that's bullshit.

Chinatown is a treasured piece of Philadelphia's history with a unique authenticity that's irreplaceable. We can't let billionaires destroy our neighborhood just so they can get even richer. We've already won battles against a stadium and a casino, and we can win this one too. So let's stand together and say no to the arena.

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CHEF REUBEN

TACOS, TRAVELS, & TRIUMPH:

CHEF REUBEN'S EPIC JOURNEY BACK TO THE KITCHEN

Let's talk about Chef Reuben, a badass culinary warrior of Indian descent who's bridging the gap between Indian and Asian flavors like a boss. This guy's the Willy Wonka of Tacos, joining flavors in ways that'll make your taste buds do a happy dance.

Now, this dude's been through some serious shit. He used to work at the swanky Stephen Starr restaurant Buddakan until 2019. But that wasn't enough for him, so he traveled around the world for two years, hitting up hot spots like Mexico, Montenegro, Dubrovnik, Paris, Venice, and Ireland. Sounds like the life, right? But hold on because it's about to get rough.

He returned, built his own food truck, and was about to take the keys when BAM! His L4 and L5 discs rupture and he loses control of his legs. Talk about a kick in the balls. Doc tells him he can never be a chef again and needs to find a new gig.

Now, most folks would have thrown in the towel, but not Chef Reuben.

He ain't taking no for an answer. He hires a personal trainer and starts pacing himself with pop-ups. It took him one and a half years to learn how to walk again. This dude's a fighter. So he doesn't give up on his passion. Each menu is based on how much his body can take, and it takes almost four days to prep and plan. That's some serious dedication.

Fast forward to 2023, and this dude's a fuckin' superstar. He's doing pop-ups left and right, getting written up in the Philly Inquirer, and building a following that's downright rabid. Chef Reuben's signature dishes are next level, like his Marrow Me Tacos with bone marrow brisket curry, ginger Thai chili relish, and fried onions. Or his Zhug Queso with homemade Yemenite aromatic chimichurri, tortilla chips, and chicharron dust. And let's not forget his Charred Corn Queso, blasted with his trusty torch.

Chef Reuben is a culinary force to be reckoned with. He's faced some serious obstacles, but this dude's grit and determination are second to none. His innovative approach to the culinary arts and his never-say-die attitude make him one to watch in the years to come. So if you see Chef Reuben's pop-ups around town, do yourself a favor and get in line. You won't regret it.

Cornstar (Nachos)

Marrow Me (Tacos)

Tikkarnitas (Tostada)

TRUFFLE CHARRED CORN QUESO

BY CHEF REUBEN

RECIPE TIME: 20 MIN

INGREDIENTS

1 lb local farm cheese

1 cup of milk, (beer or stock. Using beer will change the flavor a little but in a good way.)

1 tsp sodium citrate

30 oz of shucked corn or 2 cans

Truffle oil 2-3 drops.

METHOD

Grate your cheese and set it aside.

Char your corn with a blow torch or an open flame. For canned corn, definitely use a blow torch.

In a small pot, bring your liquid to a gentle boil and add the sodium citrate.

Stir well to dissolve the sodium citrate.

Once dissolved, add the grated/blocked cheese to your liquid and reduce the heat to medium-low or take it off the burner.

Stir continuously until the cheese sauce is melted. Do not over-mix, or it will break.

Add more liquid for a thinner cheese sauce.

Add the charred corn and Truffle Oil at the end.

Enjoy with Tortilla chips, Tortillas, Tacos, or anything you want to dip into cheese!

Social
instagram.com/chefreubenphilly

SCAN FOR PLAYLIST

GEORGIAN SODA

BY KEVIN LUNDELL

When you think of soda, you most likely jump to the image of an individual sucking down a Mega Big Gulp of Coca Cola chirping their car key fob as they lumber across a WaWa parking lot.

But the origins of soda have a more romantic history that belies their current place in American culture.

It would be egocentric of us to believe that this was a uniquely American Phenomenon.

In Georgia, there is also a long history of sodas, they originated much like American soda. natural flavors from fresh fruit or herbs are combined, à la minute, with club soda creating refreshing and bright beverages. These sodas, often referred to as Lagidze Water, take their name from Mitrofan Lagidze, the pharmacist who is credited with their origin in 1887.

Colloquially, they can also be called lemon-ade or Georgian lemon-ade, despite not necessarily containing lemon. As with many of the world's beverages, they were developed to cure aliments or assist in everyday bodily functions but soon took their place in culture as enjoyable everyday beverages. Traditional flavors included citrus fruits, pear, tarragon, cherry, & more.

Strolling by the Georgian eatery Saami Somi in the Reading Terminal Market the Zandukeli sodas in the refrigerator caught my eye. Ok, honestly, it was the cheese boats, Adjaruli Khachapuri that caught my eye, but the sodas weren't too far behind. Tarragon and pear sodas sounded delicious to me, and I'm not alone.

According to the owner/operators, Donna & Michael Kolodesh, these are the two most popular flavors. Michael says that the Tarragon flavor has a Coca-Cola level of popularity in Georgia and among the ex-soviet diaspora here in the U.S.

Well, what do they taste like? Very simply; delicious. Unlike their American counter parts, the two flavors of Zandukeli sodas (Tarragon and Pear) I was able to taste retained much of their original ethos, fresh, natural-tasting flavors.

The pear is a gold-colored liquid and shows overripe pear bordering on candied pear notes on the nose. In the mouth is has a steady sweetness with a soft effervescence of small bubbles. The ripe pear is softer to the back as the sweetness moves the candied pear to the front of the pallet.

The tarragon comes out of the bottle in a neon green that makes Midori look clear. The effervescence is gentle with an herbal nose, a touch of bitterness, and anise. In the mouth, the tarragon herbaceousness is firmly up front, backed up with soft notes of coriander and fennel seed.

Tasting Notes:

While both sodas drank great on their own but I decided to play around with them a bit.

Very simply, I added Eight Oaks Gin and a squeeze of lime to the tarragon. If the gin and tonic was my cocktail of last summer, gin, and tarragon lemonade is my drink for next summer.

The pear played well with some ginger liquor, aged Jamaican rum, and a dash of Angostura bitters.

The fresh, honest flavors pair well with food and mix well; any way you cut it, these sodas are delicious.

Add these to your fridge for regular drinking or for a great alternative mixer for your cocktail parties.

Backyard Beef Skewers

BY PHILA LORN

Photo by Mike Prince

Growing up Cambodian in South Philly has its charm. After the war, we were "saved" and placed amongst other immigrants such as Vietnamese, Laotian, and Italians. One after the other, we were the new kid at the lunch table. We all had our own styles and stories and had to let our guard down so we could live together peacefully in a new environment. One thing we never fully let go of was our food. Food was the language we all spoke fluently.

RECIPE TIME: 45 MIN

INGREDIENTS

435g Onion
500g Galangal
450g Ginger
400g Lemongrass
50g Kafir Lime Leaves
282g Shallots
220g Garlic
550g Coconut Cream
30g Dry Guajillo Peppers
200g Red Curry Paste
90g MSG
250 Honey
200g Sugar
450g Oyster Sauce
30g Salt
20g Paprika
350g Vegetable Oil

Cut ingredients small enough to put in a blender.

Use water so the machine doesn't get mad at you. Don't use so much water that you make fuckin soup.

Buy good beef (Korean short ribs or rib eye)

Cut the shit out of it. (Skewerable sizes).

Massage the meat with a little salt to relax and tenderize it.

Marinade the meat.

Grill one piece and see if you need more marinade.

Some people add chicken bouillon powder for more umami. Some people don't. Which person are you? make it, fuck it up, fix it, and keep it in your back pocket forever. It's worth the hassle.

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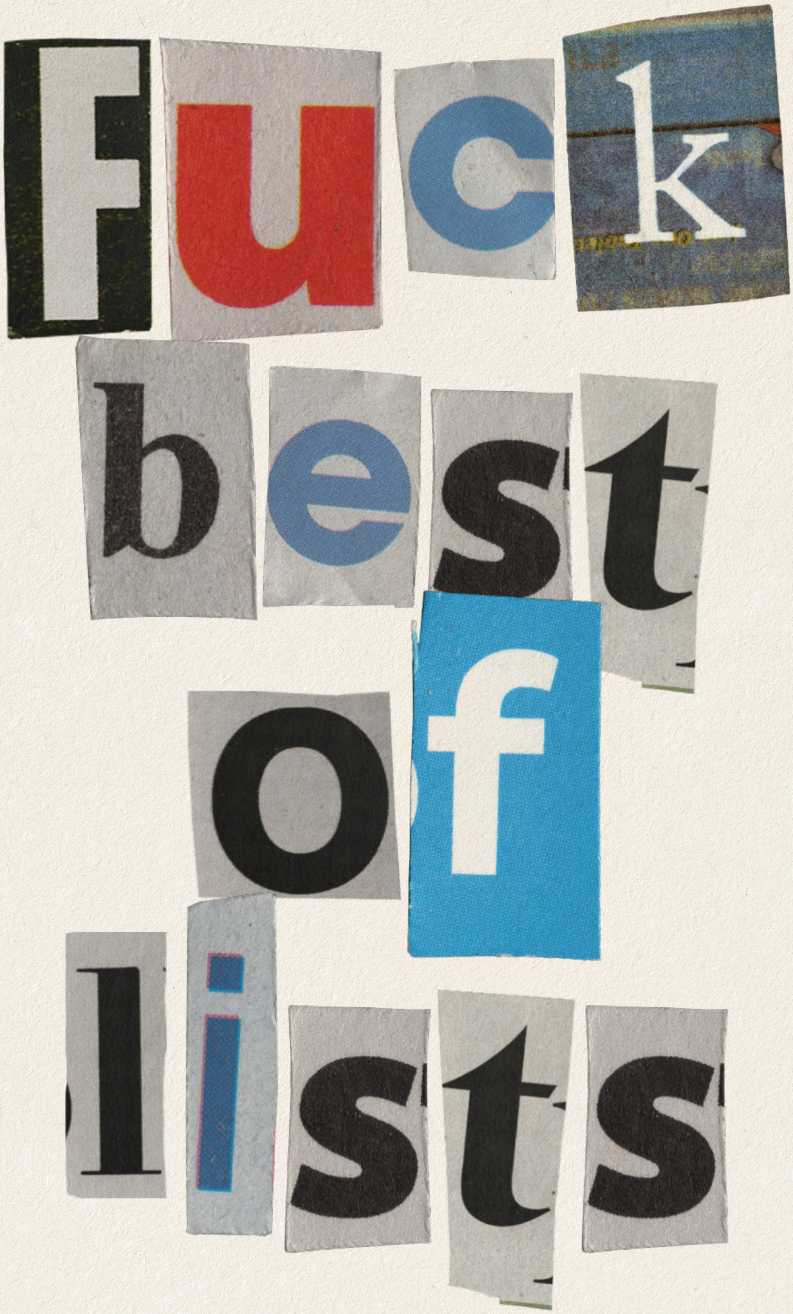

by Steve Martinho

As a lover of food and travel, I've seen my fair share of so-called "best of" lists. From the best pizza in New York City to the best Po Boy in New Orleans, these lists are ubiquitous in the world of food journalism. But let me tell you, I really despise them.

The idea of ranking something based on one person's personal experience is ridiculous. Taste is subjective; what one person loves, another person may hate. So why do we insist on creating these lists?

We all have our favorite cheesesteak spots, but once someone starts ranking these places, it completely takes away from the corner Papi store that was there for you when you might have had a few too many the night before. Suddenly, people stop going to the lower-ranked spots; before you know it, they're gone.

It's important to try new places and find what we personally enjoy. It's okay to have a bad meal and learn from it. "Best of" lists take away that sense of adventure and exploration.

I believe that “best of” lists harm the food community. They limit our ability to have authentic experiences and think for ourselves. It encourages us, or the consumer, to make decisions based off of someone else’s highly subjective opinion. This eliminates the possibility for personal discovery, and I think this is detrimental.

For the purveyor, it could be challenging to get off the ground because they haven't yet become incorporated into the food media bubble. It's not always just new places, but even mainstays that have been doing their thing for years and suddenly are touted by a food critic with no credentials other than "I like this."

Overall, it may be said that "best of" lists may seem like a quick and easy way to find great food, but they can be potentially harmful. I say, let's trust our own tastes and preserve the sense of discovery when it comes to finding great food spots. In the words of my good friend Kevin, “ if you only eat at “good places” how do you know what’s actually good?”

DAVE WEZ'S

CRAB RANGOON DIP

RECIPE TIME: 30 MIN

I LOVE those little crispy folds of cheesy crab deliciousness. But let's be honest; not all crab rangoons are created equal. First off, there are different shapes like the time-honored triangle envelope Rangoon, or its fancy cousin, the four-point flower Rangoon and of course, my favorite, the prison drug bag rangoon.

Depending on the Chinese spot, you never know what shape and how filled they will be. Nothing is worse than getting an empty crab rangoon; it's the same as a fortuneless fortune cookie. Just fucking sad. My answer to not enough delicious filling is just to make the filling. This is my family's recipe passed down from my great great great grandfather who traveled to America with only $2 and this recipe, J/K.

INGREDIENTS

8 OUNCES CREAM CHEESE
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12 OUNCES CANNED CRAB MEAT (DRAINED)

¼ CUP KEWPIE MAYO

1 TABLESPOON SOY SAUCE

1 TABLESPOON SRIRACHA OR FAVORITE HOT SAUCE

1 TABLESPOON SUGAR

2 TEASPOONS OF GARLIC POWDER

SALT & PEPPER TO TASTE

THAI SWEET CHILI SAUCE

METHOD

The Crab Rangoon Commandments Rule Number Uno, Preheat oven to 350 °

1. Mix in the dry ingredients first.
2. Mix in the wet ingredients.
3. Pour into a baking bowl or pan.
4. Bake at 350 for 25 min.
5. Drizzle Sweet chili sauce before serving.
6. Grab your favorite dipper, Ritz Cracker, tortilla chips, sliced bagels, pretzels, and veggie bites. The dipping possibilities are endless. And save the leftovers for your bagel the next morning.

Optional: *If you want to get all fancy, go for it. You can add shredded cheese like cheddar or mozzarella if you want that sexy cheese pull.*

Social
instagram.com/feedingtimetv

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I'LL TAKE A BASEMENT TABLE, PLEASE.

BY K.C. TINARI

Dan Griffiths serving second course.

Peter Jorgen Toasting his birthday.

Sam Kalkut opening wine.

Philadelphia is a lot of things, and a lot of people. There are a lot of things to do and places to be. But nothing touches Philadelphia's restaurant scene. Not the places we eat or the drinks we search out. But the people inside these places, everyone doing something to create an experience. They do it tirelessly, 365 days a year. So what happens when they cut loose?

In a dim basement, a prep area below Liberty Kitchen in Fishtown. Long tables are laid out. Linens are left behind in lieu of rags. Mismatched glassware across butcher blocks await filling from bottles brought in by people who have forgotten more about grapes than most will ever learn.

The room is lit with the orange hue of what resembles a lamp from Pizza Hut, the way it used to be.

As guests make their way to their seats, the cooks are already plating with the speed of Edward Scissor Hands grooming the neighbor's shrubs. While most would be angry to be sitting so close to the kitchen door, not these guests. Not tonight, at least. Today is a birthday, a celebration, a quiet announcement, and a moment to lift up friends.

Our host Matt Buddah quickly thanks everyone and begins the first rounds of food. Some "Top Notch Focatch" wafts out of the oven.

Oysters, olives, and salads spin around the table until nothing is left. With only brief moments of chatter, the rest is filled with noises your grandmother might blush at. A hand with a bottle of batched Negroni slips past and dumps into your glass. A bottle pops behind, and a new round of food slides in.

Melissa Mcgrath and Matt Buddah.

Dave Wez and Roland Bui enjoy Cuzzies ice cream.

Matt Buddah

Our host delicately describes the next feast, and as quickly and lustfully as the last disappears, this meal does too.

As the night winds down, the room is filled with the music of laughter and the symphony of empty bottle clinks. Boxes are hastily filled with the remnants of the feast, a little something to soak up the night later or boast about at lunch the next day. But what really lingers is the memory of a damn good time.

It's a rare pleasure for those who are accustomed to creating unforgettable moments for others to experience them for themselves. Yet, it's the ones who need it most that depart with a smile on their face and a sense of contentment. These underground dinners, shrouded in secrecy and tucked away in the city's shadows, are more than just a means of income for those involved.

They have the power to transform a miserable week into a tolerable one and leave guests already anticipating the next covert gathering.

Because at the end of the day, it's all about having a damn good time, as it was meant to be.

EDITORS NOTE:

Well, my friends, it's the end of an era - the final "pop-down" dinners at this beloved location. While these walls may hold memories that we'll always cherish, it's time to bid them farewell. But fear not; Liberty Kitchen will soon be taking its pop-ups just down the road in a larger space that will allow for even more culinary creativity.

So let's raise a glass to what we've shared in this space and get ready to embark on a new adventure. Because as we all know, the true magic of the pop-up lies not in the location but in the experience.

Matt Buddah and the Paffuto Gang.

All Photos by K.C. Tinari

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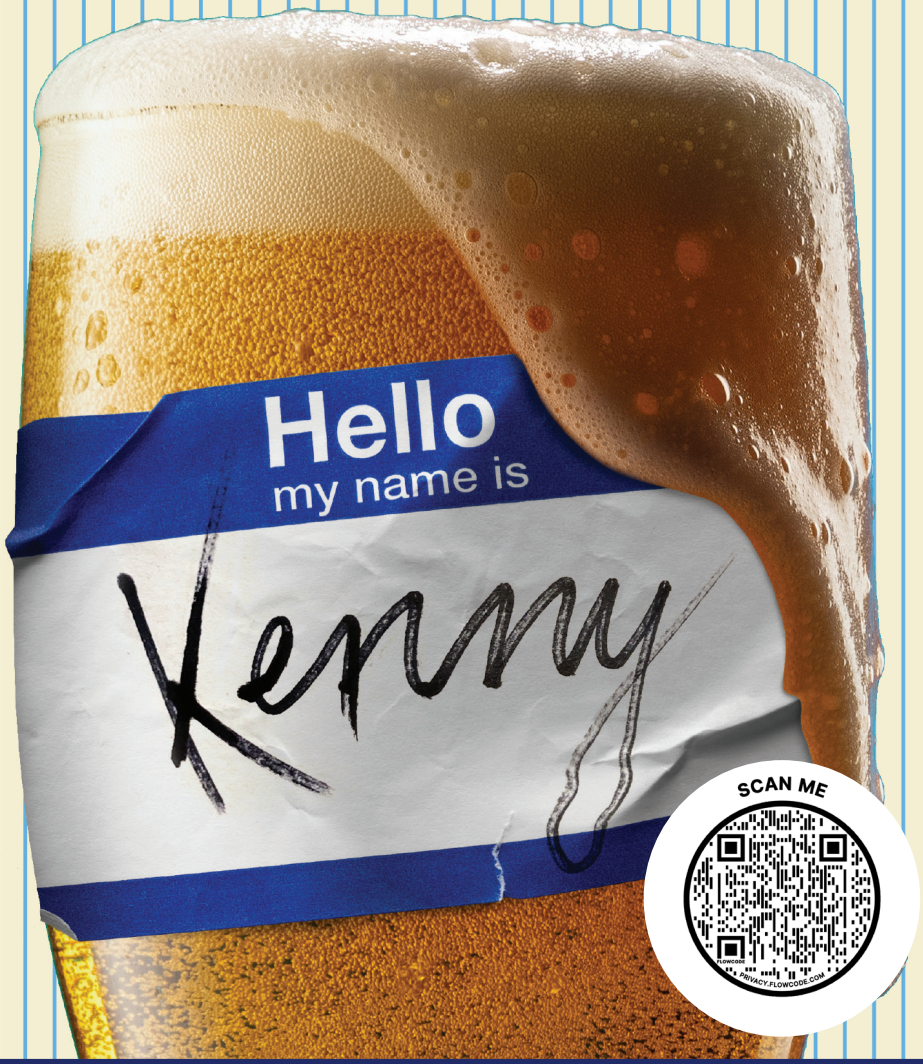

ONE NIGHT IN OAXACA

A COCKTAIL BY BENJAMIN KIRK

RECIPE TIME: 5 MIN

I created a custom mezcal-based cocktail for a guest at the bar who was looking for a dry and spirit-forward drink, but also wanted to incorporate the complex flavor of amaro. Drawing inspiration from both the Toronto and the dry Manhattan.

INGREDIENTS

2 oz Vida Mezcal
.5 oz Dry Vermouth
.25 oz Meletti
.25 oz Nonino
2 dashes Orange Bitters
Lemon Twist

METHOD

Stir Mezcal, Vermouth, Meletti, Nonino, and Orange Bitters into a shaker.

Strain into coupe glass.

Garnish with lemon peel.

Enjoy!

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HOW TO MAKE THE perfect rice!

by Steve Martinho

If you're one of the lucky ones with a rice cooker, congrats - you're part of the elite. But fear not if you don't have one, mastering the art of making rice without it is worth the effort. With a little practice, you'll be a pro in no time.

RECIPE TIME: 30 MIN

INGREDIENTS

1 1/2 cups of long-grain white, Jasmine, or Basmati rice.

2 cup water

METHOD

Measure 1 1/2 cups of white rice and pour it into a saucepan.

Fill the saucepan with water about halfway.

Shape your fingers into a claw and swirl the rice and water around the pan.

Drain the water off the rice using a fine-mesh sieve.

Repeat about three times until the water runs clear.

Measure 2 cups of water and add it to the pot.

Agitate the pan, so the rice is even. You can stir it to get rice off the sides of the pot, but once the heat is on, do NOT stir it again.

Set the pot over medium-low heat and patiently wait until it boils. If your dial goes up to 10, then you want it at 2.

While waiting, place a kitchen towel on the counter, wrap the lid with it, and tie it at the top. You don't want the kitchen towel to dangle over the heating element.

Let it boil until the water level drops below the level of the rice (the rice will be peeking through the top).

Turn the heat down to the lowest setting possible.

Set a timer for 15 minutes and walk away. Once that timer goes off, turn the heat off entirely and let the rice sit for 10 more minutes before removing the lid. You'll want to check if the rice is done but trust the process.

After 10 minutes, remove the lid and fluff the rice with a fork.

Serve hot.

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Gilda

by Steve Martinho

I don't often go in for sweets, but when I tried Gilda's pastéis de nata, I couldn't help myself. These crisp cups of dough filled with rich egg custard and just the right amount of cinnamon hit me in all the right places. As someone from a Portuguese household that didn't traditionally eat Portuguese food, Gilda's pastries brought back feelings I never knew I could feel.

The secret to a perfect pastéis de nata is in the temperature. The laminated dough must be cooked in a hot enough oven to crisp the pastry while lightly burnishing the top without overcooking the filling. It's taken Brian Mattera years to perfect the process, with his Portuguese grandmother being the ultimate judge of his success.

pastéis de nata

Gilda, the new cafe and market on 300 East Girard Ave. in Fishtown, centers its pastry menu around the traditional Portuguese treat. The cafe's name, pronounced "Jill-da," is a tribute to Mattera's late grandmother, a talented Italian-leaning cook whose recipes have been passed down through the family. One of her cookbooks sits on a shelf overlooking the dining room, filled with handwritten recipes for cannoli and lasagna.

The cafe's space has history, having previously housed Girard Bruncherie, where Brian Oliveira met his husband, Brian Mattera. The two have now launched Gilda with the intention of creating a daytime watering hole for the neighborhood. The cafe's atmosphere is warm and inviting, feeling more like the living room of a modern Portuguese grandmother than a trendy cafe.

In addition to showcasing pastries, Gilda's breakfast menu features hefty Portuguese chorizo breakfast sandwiches, while lunch includes caldo verde, salt cod fritters, cheese, charcuterie, and tinned fish plates. The cafe will also have a small market section with pantry items and prepared food available for at-home meals.

Gilda will even host pop-ups from up-and-coming chefs and businesses, paying forward the hospitality that was shown to them when they were just starting out.

Gilda is thrilled to invite everyone to indulge in the rich flavors of Portugal. The experience goes beyond just the food; it's also about the personal connections and narratives that accompany it.

Photo by Roland Bui

Serrano & Cheese with European butter, manchego, & greens on mealhada roll.

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